

Tom Horne  
Superintendent

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## ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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### **ARIZONA SCHOOLS CHIEF TOM HORNE ANNOUNCES 1872 SCHOOLS RECEIVE AZLEARNS DESIGNATIONS: SCHOOLS ARE IMPROVING AND MAINTAINING PERFORMANCE**

PHOENIX (Friday, October 14, 2005) -- Arizona Schools Chief Tom Horne announces AZ Learns designations for 1872 schools. The Arizona accountability system, known as AZ Learns, gives schools achievement profiles that are listed as: Excelling; Highly Performing; Performing Plus; Performing; Underperforming and Failing.

“I commend the schools for working very hard to improve the academic achievement of our students which resulted in higher test scores. Many of our schools have moved to higher achievement profiles due to students learning more and demonstrating that in their test scores,” said Horne.

Horne added: “The Department has created a system of support for schools meeting the challenges of accountability since 2003. First, we sent Solutions teams to our underperforming schools, and then, we sent assist coaches to the schools and created best practice academies throughout the state. After that, if a school was still failing to meet academic progress, State intervention specialists were assigned to each school to create a two year school intervention plan.”

Horne also identified four major themes for successful improvement: use of student assessment data to design instruction and interventions; schools’ willingness to implement systemic change through strategic planning; targeted instructional intervention that meets the needs of every child; and targeted professional development that is specific to the needs and goals as identified by solution teams, ADE staff and school staff.

The Department has also identified 152 schools that are pending a designation. Of the schools pending a designation, 33 are appeals that have not been resolved through the appeals process. 120 schools’ designations will be recalculated due to an “unintended consequence” of the AZ Learns formula. Superintendent Horne has requested that the State Board of Education take action on the 120 schools designations at the next State Board meeting on October 24 in Sierra Vista.

The 120 schools identified are schools that performed at a proficiency rate of over 90 percent, and therefore significant additional growth in that category is not realistic. The formula, which designates 30% for growth, has unintended and unfair consequences for these highly successful schools. Until the State Board can consider whether it wants to take action on the formula at its meeting October 24, these schools will be listed as “pending.”

The number of schools in each category are: failing to meet academic standards (pending site visit) 1; underperforming 115; performing 743; performing plus 462; highly performing 181; excelling 219.

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